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C O N F I D E N T I A L NAIROBI 001326

SIPDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR RANNEBERGER FOR A/S CARSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/29/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [KDEM](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: SOMALIA - CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT SHARIF

Classified By: Ambassador Michael E. Ranneberger. Reasons: 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (C) Somali President Sheikh Sharif called me on June 28 to discuss the situation in Mogadishu and the upcoming African Union summit.

¶2. (C) Sharif said that the tempo of fighting in Mogadishu has reduced in recent days, but he has no doubt that the al-Shabaab will maintain a strong offensive to try and topple the Transitional Federal Government (TFG). He remains confident that the TFG can resist this offensive and then eventually expand its authority beyond Mogadishu. He said that TFG forces have inflicted &serious damage8 on al-Shabaab militia during the latest rounds of fighting. As a result, Sharif said, the al-Shabaab is forcibly conscripting young men and putting them into training camps.

¶3. (C) Sharif said that 120 al-Shabaab militia under Ahmed Madoobe just defected to the TFG because they disagree with the tactics the al-Shabaab is using and with the outside support it is receiving. Sharif said that Madoobe has agreed to talk with the media, which the TFG is arranging.

¶4. (C) Sharif said that the TFG now believes the number of foreign fighters supporting the TFG has been underestimated. While the TFG has little hard data or evidence, they are receiving reports of more foreign fighters and al-Shabaab heading towards Mogadishu.

¶5. (C) Sharif emphasized that the al-Shabaab is receiving substantial support from al-Qaeda and from Eritrea. He said that Eritrean officers are in Mogadishu helping al-Shabaab direct its military offensive. Sharif said one of the Eritreans in Mogadishu is a Colonel Dharmi. As I have previously, I emphasized the need for the TFG to give us on an urgent basis whatever specific information they may have regarding al-Qaeda involvement, foreign fighters, and Eritrean involvement. Sharif said that the TFG would provide this, but the TFG has promised to do so in the past and we have not yet received anything.

¶6. (C) Sharif said he looks forward to meeting with A/S Carson at the AU, and wants to coordinate closely with us. Sharif said he has three objectives for the AU summit: (1) get the AMISOM mandate expanded to enable AMISOM to play a more direct military role in support of the TFG, and bring AMISOM forces up to 8,000 strength; (2) make the case regarding the al-Qaeda threat in Somalia and the threat which that poses to other African countries; and (3) seek more forceful action against Eritrea because Eritrea is supporting the al-Shabaab and, in the process, is working with al-Qaeda.

¶7. (C) Sharif stressed his appreciation for continued U.S. support which, he said, has been vital in helping the TFG resist the al-Shabaab offensive. He asked the U.S. to continue urging the international community to provide tangible support to the TFG.

RANNEBERGER